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16 January 1985

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MEMORANDUM FOR: Chief, Office of East Asian Analysis

FROM:

[redacted]
Chief, South Asia Division, NESA

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SUBJECT: Soviet Presence in the Andaman and
Nicobar Islands [redacted]

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1. Rumors of a Soviet naval presence in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands have been circulating since the 1970s, but we have no evidence to confirm the allegations. The latest rumor occurred in December 1984 when the [redacted] was approached by another [redacted] for information about a possible recent increase in Soviet presence at Port Blair and submarine operations in the area. [redacted]

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2. Allegations such as these probably are fueled by the extensive Indian security surrounding the islands and the frequent presence in the area of Indian surface combatants, submarines, and landing ships of Soviet origin. The tight security and restrictions on travel to the islands probably are for military reasons--they are strategically located close to the northern end of the Strait of Malacca that provides direct access into the Indian Ocean and are used for extensive joint-service amphibious training--and, as New Delhi claims, to protect the ethnic heritage of the indigenous population. [redacted]

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3. We have no information that Moscow has sought access to facilities at Port Blair from New Delhi. The naval and civilian support facilities there, [redacted] can handle ships no larger than a frigate by our estimates. [redacted] there are no graving docks large enough for repair of submarines. Still, we cannot

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DIA review completed.


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NGA Review Completed


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totally rule out the possibility that a small number of Soviet
construction or technical personnel could be involved in the
expansion of naval and air facilities in the islands. 

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